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132 Although there is slight variation in the amount of rainfall within the annual cycle, during the months of December, January, and February the Sepik is in flood. This fact is of such importance to the river people that they divide the year into periods of high and low water. This seasonal periodicity is also noted by the Kwoma, but it is significant to them only in so far as it affects their commerce with the river people.

136 Cassowaries, wildfowl, hornbills, cockatoos, pigeons, and a great many unidentified species of smaller birds abound in the region. The only large mammal is the wild pig. The natives report that there were formerly wallabies in the region but that now there are none. There are several varieties of small tree-climbing marsupials. Many species of bats of different size despoil the fruit trees.

137 The flora of the region is tropical. The trunks of giant trees support a mat of foliage fifty to sixty feet in the air, so dense that the sun scarcely filters through it, except where the natives have cleared a garden or house site. The swamp land is full of sago palms whose thorn-studded spathes make passage difficult. Small stands of areca and coconut palms mark the sites of habitations past and present. Betel pepper vines cling to the pawpaw, breadfruit, and paper mulberry
241 trees which the natives plant near each dwelling. Many varieties of yams, taro, and greens are grown as a first crop in Kwoma gardens; these are followed by a second crop of bananas and plantains of numerous varieties.

142 The Kwoma are short, stocky, negroid people with long heads, dark frizzly hair, medium thick lips, and skin color varying from light to dark brown.[2] The homogeneity in physical type is immediately apparent, although there is one family with two generations of strikingly aberrant members, whose skin is so blond that it sunburns. The so-called Papuan, or Semitic, nose-form occurs at random about as often as the dished type. Noses with straight bridges, however, are the most common.

141 [2] Their average height is five feet four inches, and their cephalic index is in the upper range of mesocephaly (71.7 to 83.6, average 77.4). These figures were taken from twenty adult males.

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tongue, however, and told me that most of the women of the hamlet were afraid of her. Finally the shouting subsided, and that evening Yat and Wof, Mar's *uncle* and foster father, discussed the affair calmly, decided that Yawa was guilty of stealing the grubs, and arranged for Kafa and Yat to be repaid in kind with grubs taken from one of Mar's plots. When Wof returned home, he lectured Yawa severely for her offense and threatened to beat her if she did it again.

A Kwoma weds soon after he becomes adult. Adolescent courtship, culminating in the trial marriage in which the girl comes to live with the boy's parents, is finally terminated, if all goes well, by a special ceremony which makes the couple man and wife. The boy's mother determines when this ceremony shall take place. If she is satisfied with the girl and knows that her son is also, she tells her to cook the food for the afternoon meal. Hitherto the betrothed has cooked food only for herself, and the boy's food has been prepared by his mother or sisters. The mother chooses an occasion when the boy is away from the house, so that, when he returns, he begins eating his soup unsuspectingly. When he has nearly finished his first bowl, his mother informs him that it was his betrothed who cooked the meal and that he is now married. At this announcement, it is expected that the boy will rush from the house and exclaim as he spits out the soup: "Faugh! It tastes bad! It is cooked terribly."

After the wedding ceremony, the couple live together as man and wife, and the customs which regulate marital sexual behavior apply to them. They never sleep in the same bed but lie alone on separate bark slabs, joining only for copulation, which is performed with a minimum of embracing and foreplay. All informants insisted that a husband and wife should not sleep together. When I asked Gwiyap if he might not sleep with his wife on cold nights, he replied, "No, I would be ashamed to." I asked why and he replied, "It is a bad thing to do. The big men like my uncle War would be cross. It is his duty to take care of me and see that I do nothing wrong."[20]

[20] *Homba*, "shame" or "guilt" is the same word which Kwoma use to

685 621 578 885 583 585 593 833 513 [192] [196]

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The market at which Kwoma women are trading their surplus of sago flour for fish brought by the river natives. The woman in the foreground is Marok's sister, Uka, holding a lump of sago flour in each hand. See Chapter VI, pages 119–120. The scars on her chest and around her navel are those she received as a mark of adulthood. See Chapter VI, page 136.

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Mundik just after he had fled to our house for sanctuary after having been beaten and bound for attending the cult meeting associated with the second funeral feast. This ceremony is restricted to those who have received their keloids of manhood. Mundik, being a Yelagu, had not received these. A further reason for his being beaten was that he had killed his wife in a fit of rage and fled to Kwoma, his mother's former home, to escape being killed by his wife's relatives. The Kwoma shunned him and used his breach of cult rules as an excuse for expressing their feelings toward a person they believed to be a homicidal maniac. Had he not loosened the bonds on his ankles and escaped from the house in which he was imprisoned, he may well have been killed before the ceremony ended. See Chapter VI, page 144, and Chapter VIII, page 213.

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Kum, the chief character of the weaning period. See Chapter III.

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Gwiyap, our best informant, wearing a laplap which he had earned working for us as a house boy. See Chapter V.

443 start the business. They bring two or three bundles of small fish each.
439 The bundle is of narrow brown leaves about a foot long and two inches in diameter, and contains between one and two dozen minnows of at least three different species. They walk about looking over the different lumps of sago which the Waskuk women have broken up into pieces roughly six inches square. One "rope" of fish is worth one block of sago at the present rate of exchange. But there is some inspection of the sago on the part of the Yambons and a similar feeling of the fish bundles by the Waskuk. There is little talk during the exchange. A Yambon woman sees some sago that catches her fancy. She taps the woman who stands by it to gain her attention and offers her a "rope" of fish. The Waskuk woman pinches the fish, is satisfied, and hands her a block of sago for it. The Yambon carries the sago to her canoe and comes back with more fish. The Yambons now change their article of trade from fish to the native spinach, and betel nuts. A few ropes of beads are also offered for the little sago that remains. The whole period of actual trade had been about 15 minutes. The few men of Yambon and Waskuk who are present wander about on the edges and take no active part in the exchange. When it is finished, the Waskuk retire toward the forest with their net bags only partly filled by the few fish and vegetables they have received. They all stop in a little pool in the swamp grass to wash the last bits of sago from the bark wrappers.

142 " The contrast between the Yambon and Waskuk women in physique is very clearly seen at this time. It is like looking at paintings by El Greco and Rubens side by side. Yambon women are short, spindly and undernourished looking. Their breasts droop and their malars stand out. Their colour is dark brown. Few of them would look out of place riding a broomstick,

142 for their feces are drawn and their mouths turn down at the corners. The Waskuk on the other hand are big women. Their stomachs protrude before and their butts behind. Their bosoms are full to overflowing, and their round faces are usually split by an ear-to-ear grin. In skin colour they are noticeably lighter than the Yambons. Only one or two old women are present."

342 Yesterday afternoon (Nov. 12), I went down to Mar's house. It is a structure about eight feet high at the ridgepole with a fairly gentle slope to the roof which ends about two feet above the ground. The side walls and the back and front are made of sago bark sewed together. When dried, the bark is about the thickness and consistency of beaver board. About two thirds of the house is closed off by another wall of sago bark with only a small doorway about two by four feet, with the sill about a foot and a
353 half from the ground. This can be closed by a sago bark door. This door
342 is the only opening in the inner room, which is used for sleeping, storing their clay pots, their cooked sago, and their net bags. The latter are hung with a half coconut shell on the roof so the rats cannot get at them.
[892] In this room sleep Mar, his mother, his classificatory sister and two boys
[513] who are his classificatory brothers. They sleep with only a slab of sago bark between them and the ground. The beds are leaned up against the wall during the day. All of them sleep with their feet toward the door. Interestingly enough, Mar's wife sleeps in another house.

The third of the house not inclosed by this room acts as a sort of
[354] porch. Here a huge pot about two and a half feet in diameter and two feet
[262] high was braced up by stones over a fire and a sort of blood red soup made
[415] of a kind of bark and sago was bubbling. One of the boys dished out a half
[412] coconut full of this and ate it with a trade spoon. I noticed some spears
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